



Quick Reads

Thomas Newton, MPP, REHS
Director, Iowa Department of Public Health

March 30, 2010

Laws governing boards of health signed

Local boards of health and county public health partners will be interested to know that Governor Culver has signed the revisions of [Iowa Code Chapter 137](#) into law. This chapter deals specifically with local boards of health. Changes include: no new city boards of health will be allowed to form after July 1, 2010; language about [Public Health Modernization](#) and the [Iowa Public Health Standards](#) has been added; the section on district boards of health has been expanded to contain the necessary legal foundation; and local boards of health will now have the ability to impose both criminal and civil penalties.

[Iowa Code Chapter 136](#), which relates to the roles and responsibilities of the Iowa State Board of Health, also received an update. Changes include: updating the membership to include both a physician and members with public health experience; updating the board's duties and the removal of outdated language; additional language to allow the board the ability to create a substance abuse and gambling program committee to oversee licensure of those two programs; and changes to allow the board more flexibility in scheduling their meetings, which must be held at least six times a year.

To view the new laws, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/mphi/legislative.asp. For additional information, please contact Joy Harris at jharris@idph.state.ia.us.

Iowa e-Health receives \$8.4 million

IDPH has been awarded \$8,375,000 over the next four years to plan and implement Iowa's statewide health information exchange (HIE). The funding comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [Office of the National Coordinator for](#)

[Health Information Technology \(ONC\)](#) as part of the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#).

[Iowa e-Health](#) is a public and private collaboration with a mission of improving health care quality, safety and efficiency through the use of health information technology (health IT). Health IT offers an opportunity to improve patient care through the collection of patient health information in electronic health records that can be shared with other care providers through the statewide health information exchange. This information is vital for professionals to provide effective care that can save lives. Regardless of whether you receive care across the street or across the state, medical professionals will have the ability to access your health information instantly through the secure statewide health information exchange. For more information, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/ehealth.

Governor signs domestic violence prevention bill

I am pleased that Governor Culver recently signed legislation that will help protect Iowa families by taking guns out of the hands of abusers. [Senate File 2357](#) prohibits a person who has been convicted of a domestic abuse crime, or is subject to a permanent civil protective order, from possessing firearms or other offensive weapons.

Service contract quality improvement update

As mentioned in *Quick Reads* earlier this year, IDPH has committed to making some important [quality improvements](#) regarding our [contracting process](#). Beginning as early as July 1, we will introduce an electronic file sharing system similar to the document library available to Health Alert Network (HAN) users. Called SharePoint, the program will not be as restrictive as that of the HAN and will utilize expanded features to allow easy access to folders and files.

I'm very excited about this development, as using an electronic file sharing system implies a real cost savings. For contractors, such as local public health agencies, the new system will decrease the time it takes for service contracts to arrive from IDPH, meaning that local partners can begin serving their communities in a more timely manner. They will also be able to submit expenditure reports electronically, which reduces turnaround time for payments. Additionally, contractors will no longer have to use registered mail or hand-deliver grant applications to our office in Des Moines. Finally, this new system means decreased administrative costs for the state as well. By being able to access, review, approve, and catalog documents with just a few clicks of a mouse, IDPH will be able to reduce the amount of staff time devoted to completing the contracting process. For more information, please visit the recently added "[Quality Improvement](#)" section of our Public Health Modernization site, www.idph.state.ia.us/mphi/quality_improvement.asp.

MLC recognizes Iowa's QI initiatives

I'd like to share some kudos given to Iowa recently by representatives of the [Multi-State Learning Collaborative \(MLC\): Lead States in Public Health Quality Improvement](#) project during a recent site visit to our state. I was happy to have joined our visitors that day, during which IDPH staff members Erin Barkema and Joy Harris presented on Iowa's continued efforts to develop and establish our own state-based voluntary accreditation program and how the passage of the [Public Health Modernization Act](#) has encouraged this process. Later, our visitors said that "a major theme of the site visit was the success that Iowa has had in creating a positive culture and buy-in for quality improvement across the state." To view some of the materials shared that day, visit <http://nnphi.org/home/section/3/ecatalog>. Under Programs, select Multi-State Learning Collaborative and then select Iowa.

New resource can help with planning efforts

IDPH has released another important resource that should help many local communities with their Community Health Needs Assessment and Health Improvement Plans ([CHNA & HIP](#)) this year. The [2010 Center for Rural Health and Primary Care Report](#) provides a wide variety of state data, national information, and program information affecting medically underserved and rural areas of Iowa. The 34-page document also highlights organizations, initiatives, and smart practices that are making a difference to the health and well-being of rural and underserved Iowa residents. To view the report, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/rural_health_primary_care.asp.

Is your practice ready to be a medical home?

The first session of the [Medical Home Learning Community](#) will be held on April 21 in Des Moines. Organized by the [Iowa Healthcare Collaborative](#), the Medical Home Learning Community has been helping providers for the last two years in moving their practices toward becoming patient-centered medical homes. Geared toward primary care clinics, practice teams explore the challenges and share lessons learned on the journey to becoming PCMH. To register or learn more, visit www.ihconline.org or contact Janelle Nielsen at nielsenj@ihconline.org.

Stay informed, share your story

To get *Quick Reads* directly in your inbox, please send a blank e-mail to join-quick_reads@lists.ia.gov. To contribute a news item or smart practice, please write to Don McCormick at dmccormi@idph.state.ia.us.

To everyone in public health and all our partners, keep up the great work!

— Tom

